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NATURE IN ART.

BY F. EDWARD HULME, F.L.S., F.S.A.

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IT would be wandering too far from our subject to detail the nature of this pictorial writing, we have already done so elsewhere, and it would take up more space besides than we can well spare, we content ourselves, therefore, with pointing out that one great use of animal forms in Egyptian art, springs from their use as symbols in the inscriptions on the monuments. Cleopatra's Needle, the great Luxor Obelisk in Paris, together with the ancient remains, sarcophagi and the like, in museums, will furnish abundant illustrations.

In Assyrian art animal forms are largely employed, but almost entirely in a pictorial and decorative way. The national religion was of a simpler type than that of Egypt, while instead of the curious hieroglyphic characters with their abounding animal forms, we get the equally curious arrow-head, entirely devoid of any suggestion of natural form.

Our chief storehouse for examples is the slabs that decorated the walls of the palaces and temples of Nineveh and Khoyunjik, and these imbibe the Egyptian forms which deal with the life of the

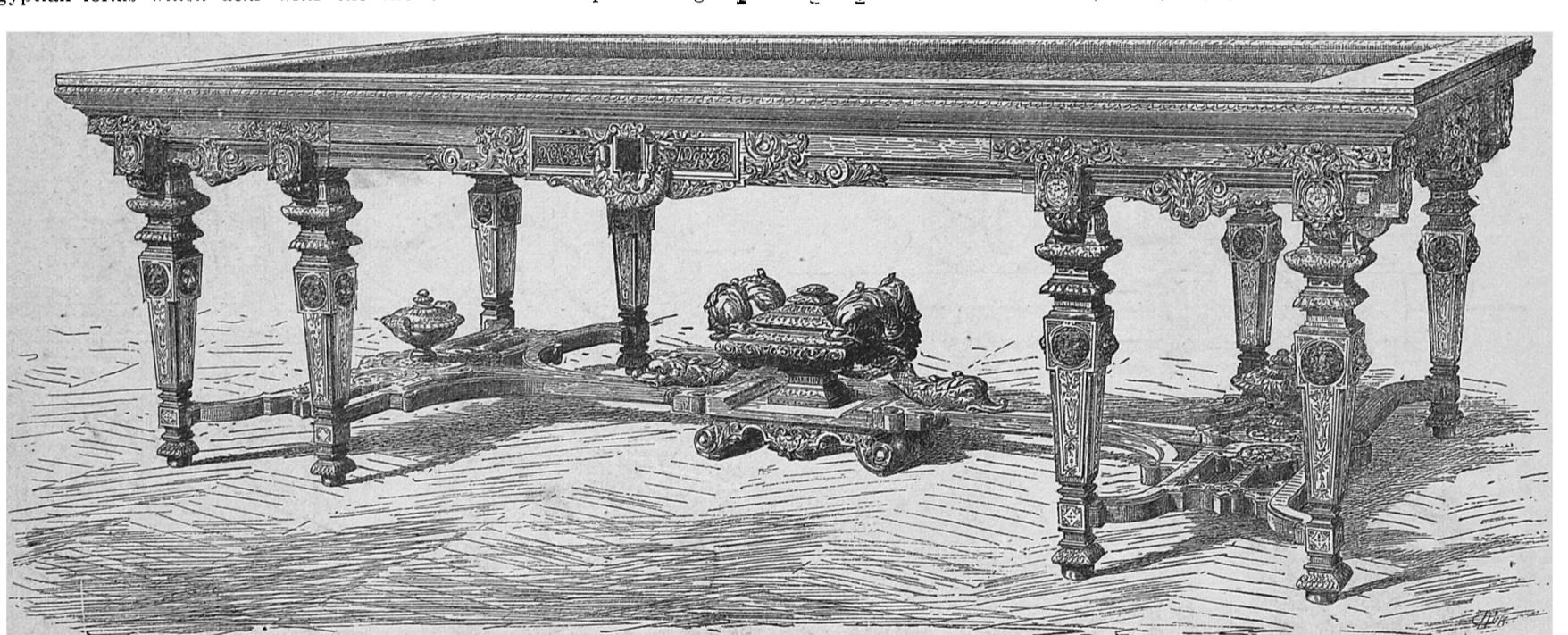


deavor, by means of lighted torches thrown on the artificial towers, reared against them, to check their dangerous proximity, but while some of the besiegers pour their arrows from these points of vantage, others throw water on the kindling flames. In another place we see a vigorous escalade, and while some gain the battlements, others are hurled headlong to the ground. As in Egyptian and most other early art, the principal performers, the monarch and his generals, are drawn to a much larger scale than the subordinate actors. Floral forms are but rarely given, and are often very conventional in character; we find amongst others the palm tree and various unrecognizable kinds of fruit trees.

Greek art is as immense a stride beyond Assyrian in its truth to nature, as Assyrian was to Egyptian. At the fall of Nineveh, B. C. 606, Greek art was in its infancy, though amongst the Ionians the arts were far in advance of the other states, owing to their greater proximity to Assyria and Persia. The earlier ideas of the Greeks in art matters, and in most other things as well, came from Egypt, and the primitive Greek statues show these foreign influences very distinctly. The bas-reliefs from the monument at Xanthus in Lycia, now in the British museum, are amongst the earliest remains of Greek art, and like the Egyptian and Assyrian sculptures, the faces are in profile, while the eye is given as if in full view. Even in this very early work, about agreeing in date with the destruction of Nineveh, we see abundant promise; the muscles have not that exaggerated development we see in Assyrian art, and while such care is not bestowed on minutiae, the draperies hang in bolder and freer folds. The

perhaps less familiar to some of our readers. The ram's head appears in a coin of Delphis, while the greyhound is from a coin of Segesta, and the boar is a device found on the money of Salapia. The struggle between the bull and the lion, a struggle having a symbolic significance into which we cannot enter, is from a beautiful coin of Acanthus in Macedonia. Other examples we figure give illustrations of the use of the lower forms, as the crab, the dolphin, perch and escallop shell. But slight use is made of floral forms, these are only introduced conventionally and in subordinate positions, or else naturally as in occasional sprays of vine, olive, etc., where their introduction helps to tell the story the better, the figures being by far the most important.

Roman art in its earlier stages was but an inferior spray of the art of Greece, but in the later stages as in the Mosaics of Rome, of Ravenna, or of Byzantium, it gained an individuality of its own, what it has lost in the process being the most conspicuous feature. The forms are stiff and constrained, the faces expressionless, the drapery rigid and unreal. Owing to the fact of a good deal of this later work being done after the establishment of Christianity, and at a time when symbolism of form was in the ascendant, we find a considerable use made both of animal and vegetable forms, all being rendered very stiffly. In consequence of this symbolic application we find such forms as the lion, lamb, eagle, dove and serpent largely intro-



A FRENCH BILLIARD TABLE, WALNUT, ORNAMENTED WITH EBONY AND INLAID WITH IVORY. SIZE, 4½ x 9 FEET.
MADE BY M. PALISSON, PARIS. AWARDED THE BRONZE MÉDAL AT THE UNIVERSAL EXPOSITION OF 1878.

whole nation, refer almost exclusively to the might of the sovereign, and all the incidents represented bear in some way on the power of the kings of Assyria. The representations have not the flat diagrammatic character of those of the Egyptian remains, but strive after the freedom of nature, hence, while some of the attempts at foreshortening the figures and so forth are almost ludicrous, their very quaintness attracts us to them, and while we cannot always congratulate the sculptor on the success of his efforts, we can at least honor him

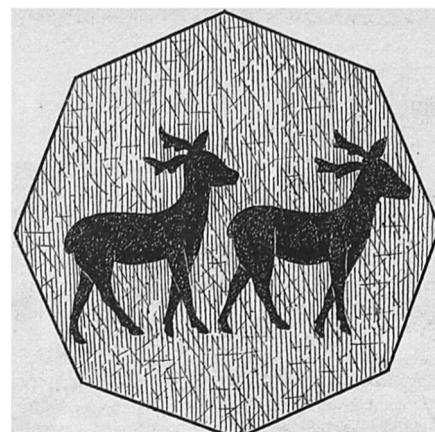
for the attempt to honestly represent natural truth. The action is often full of energy and the story well told. A greatly enhanced interest is, of course, given to these ancient remains from the fact of their representing the deeds of Essarhaddon and Sennacherib,

such scenes as the siege of Lachish, and many other events alluded to by the writers of the Old Testament, but in any case their vigor and truth would impress immensely those who see them for the first time. In the sieges, for example, we see the monarch in his chariot directing the operations; the battering-ram is propelled against the walls, and while on the one hand the besieged try to overturn it by looped chains let down from the wall, the besiegers struggle to maintain it in its place by long hooks. Others on the walls en-

faces have the expressionless look that is common to all early art. The gradual progress from this archaic work to the glorious masterpieces of Phidias and Scopas can readily be traced, though it would take up far too much space to give the history in detail. The Greeks confined themselves almost entirely to the representation of humanity or to ideal figures of the gods and goddess clothed

duced. The foliage both in the paintings and sculptures is of a very rigid type, the classic acanthus giving place to a leaf of a much more spiny and less flower character. The palm branch is freely employed as a symbol in the hands of the victorious saints and martyrs of the church. In the earlier pre-Christian church such myths as that of Orpheus were largely introduced and gave great scope for the introduction of animal forms. The two stags are from a panel in a Roman mosaic pavement discovered at York. The remains of Pompeii afford abundant illustrations of Roman art, many of the bronze statues and mural paintings are admirably executed. The wall paintings are particularly interesting as they are executed in a free and artistic manner, and give us a high idea of the art power available in this provincial town.

The subjects are often legendary, as the myth of Perseus and Andromeda, or the sacrifice of Iphigenia, another is a farm yard scene, another a domestic supper party, a dance of fauns, or little cupids chariot racing, while many of the single figures of nymphs in the centre of panels are full of grace and beauty. Where nature was striven after the result was excellent and much of the conventional arabesque decoration was equally good; of these we gave in March an example in the quaint form, that is half horse, half foliated scroll.



in human form, though occasionally, as in the horses on the frieze of Parthenon, they give lower forms of animal life with much truth and spirit. Their coins frequently have devices of animals impressed on them, the symbols of the various cities and states. Coins may be considered as sculpture in miniature, and many of the Greek devices are very beautifully rendered. The money of Athens has the well-known type of the owl and olive spray upon it, the examples we figure are

